

ITC TANK FIRE & RESPONSE DEER PARK, TEXAS

BACKGROUND:

- On March 17, 2019, Intercontinental Terminals Company LLC (ITC) discovered a tank, containing naphtha, on fire and reported the incident to the National Response Center.
- A total of fifteen (15) tanks were within the tank battery involved in the fire. Other tanks in the battery contained gasoline, oil, xylenes, Pygas, and Toluene.
- On March 22, 2019, the secondary containment for the impacted tank battery failed, resulting in a spill of thousands of barrels of product and firefighting water/foam into Tucker Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel.
- A Shelter-in-place was issued for the residents and businesses of Deer Park during the initial fire, as well as the subsequent fire. The fires resulted in the collapse, burning, or damage of all fifteen (15) tanks.
- On March 23, 2019, in consultation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), EPA issued ITC an Administrative Order requiring the facility to comply with a broad Scope of Work, prescribing such efforts as securing the facility to prevent further discharge of chemicals, conducting spill response, removal of the discharged chemicals and efforts to prevent further hazardous air releases.
- On April 17, 2019, at the request of ITC, with concurrence from TCEQ, and pursuant to EPA's emergency response authorities, EPA authorized the treatment and discharge of the incident-related wastewater from one specific tank through the on-site wastewater treatment system.
- ITC has removed all material they are able to remove until the tanks are deconstructed. ITC has begun the deconstruction of five (5) primary tanks with remaining sludge/product that may have benzene vapor emissions. The remaining ten (10) tanks will be addressed in a later phase.

KEY POINTS:

- EPA response activities are being transitioned to Texas and demobilization of federal assets is underway.
- ITC has completed the transfer of all materials possible from the damaged tanks until each tank can be deconstructed.
- ITC began the first tank deconstruction on May 13, 2019.
- The Houston ship channel has been reopened with unrestricted access. Most of all recoverable material has been removed.
- Approximately 97% of the shoreline has been cleaned-up. Air monitoring continues and will be revisited once tanks are emptied.
- Congressional Interest: High media and Congressional interest. EPA participated in meetings with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (district 18) and Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia (district 29), briefed Congressman Al Green (district 9) at his request and had multiple briefings for Congressman Brian Babin (district 36). EPA also received an inquiry from Congressman Crenshaw (district 2).

TALKING POINTS:

- EPA, along with TCEQ, Harris County Pollution Control Services and ITC worked together in a Unified Command for this incident.
- Air monitoring performed by Unified Command members was conducted 24-hours a day to provide necessary data to local officials to assist in making protective action decisions for their communities, as well as ensuring emergency responders were adequately protected.
- EPA deployed its aircraft (ASPECT), which was able to fly above the ITC plant during and after the fire to monitor any immediate air quality threats to those downwind from the plant. The ASPECT flew 27 flights and over 50 hours throughout the area.

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- EPA's mobile laboratory (TAGA), capable of real-time sampling of outdoor air or emissions, was deployed and monitored the ambient air in the communities surrounding and downwind from the ITC facility. As of May 13, 2019, it has covered over 7,300 miles collecting more than 3,800,000 data points in the Houston area. Additionally, EPA conducted handheld air monitoring and collected over 3,178 readings. Currently, we are seeing no exceedances of constituents of concern in the surrounding communities.
- On March 21, 2019, the day after the fire was initially extinguished, EPA began monitoring surface water for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), including PFOA and PFOS, in both Tucker Bayou and Buffalo Bayou.
- Through an Administrative Order issued on March 23, 2019, EPA has required ITC to conduct surface water sampling for contaminants, including PFAS. The order also requires ITC to remove spilled material and take actions to prevent it from migrating farther downstream.
- EPA developed and implemented a robust surface water sampling plan that includes sampling for PFAS chemicals. EPA will rely on all available tools and methods to provide as much information to the public as possible about PFAS levels in local waterways.
- Neither EPA nor TCEQ has established action levels for PFOA and PFOS in surface water.
- In addition to PFAS, EPA collected and analyzed surface water samples for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), chemical oxygen demand (COD), and oil & grease. No exceedances have been observed since April 5, 2019, in Buffalo Bayou/Houston Ship Channel.
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- EPA is using the Story Map Resource which was created by EPA, in coordination with the TCEQ to provide information to the public. The ITC Story Map shows sampling data by location, allowing the public to see what is being measured in their community. The Story Map Resource can be found within the Site Response website.